

own annotation (in 1983) on a determination slip affixed to *King's Coll.* 5243 in CAL, on which they annotated 'Iso-lectotype! (de Wit, Reinwardtia 3: 518, 1956)'.

Furthermore, *Kunstler* was one of the collectors of *King* (see Stafleu and Cowan, Tax. Lit. 2: 545. 1979, 2nd ed.), and on the 12 relevant sheets (type herbarium – CAL), with the field numbers 2238, 2466, 4049, 5243 & 8758, printed herbarium labels with the inscription '*Coll. H. Kunstler*' or '*Dr. King's Collector*' (also in print) had been randomly attached. So, it seems that the sheets in K may also have the same type of

labelling as in CAL. Under these circumstances, it is quite probable that the specimen cited by Larsen and Larsen as the holotype (*King's Coll.* 5243 - K) is not the same lectotype specimen (*Kunstler* 5243 - K) selected by de Wit, unless one of them had changed *Kunstler* into *King's Coll.* or *vice versa* intentionally.

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33. ON HELFER'S COLLECTION OF *PIPER RIBESIOIDES* WALL, FROM THE BAY ISLANDS, INDIA

The history of botanic explorations of the Andaman Islands dates back to 1791, when Colonel Kyd of the East India Company gardens at Calcutta visited these islands to procure timber trees. Subsequently, Dr Helfer, a Russian geologist who visited these islands to explore their mineral wealth in 1834, made extensive collections of plant material. Unfortunately, he was killed by the aborigines of North Andamans, and most of the specimens he had collected earlier from Tenassarim (Myanmar) got mixed up with those he collected from the Andamans, causing much confusion in their geographical location. Most of the species collected by him were collected again by later botanists and their occurrence in the Andaman Islands was confirmed. However, a few specimens are yet to be obtained, and their existence among the islands of Andamans is unconfirmed.

The tropical rain forests of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are known to possess many rare and potentially useful wild relatives of economically important plant species such as wild rice (*Oryza indandamanica* Ellis), wild tea (*Camellia kissi* Wall.) and wild nutmeg (*Myristica andamanica* Hook. f.). Wild occurrence of popular cultivars like coconut

palm (*Cocos nucifera* L.) and betel vine (*Piper betle* L.) among the islands of the Andamans are indicators on their point of origin. Many of them are promising in the field of modern agriculture and traditional systems of medicine. *Piper ribesioides* Wall., a species allied to *Piper cubeba* L. f. collected by Dr. Helfer in 1834 was deposited at Kew with the locality mentioned as Tennassarim/Andamans (sic). The occurrence of this species in Andaman Islands was doubtful till its recent discovery from the Mount Harriet hill ranges and collections made by one of the authors (S.P. Mathew 20558 PBL & K). During the present floristic survey, this species was found growing along the edges of the Semi-evergreen Forests of Mount Harriet, the highest peak in South Andamans near the Wright Myo village.

Piper ribesioides Wall., Pl. As. Rar. 1:79. t. 9. 1830; DC. in Jour. Asiat. Soc. Bengal 75: 322. 1849 & Prodr. 16 (1): 342. 1869; Hook. f., Fl. Brit. India 5: 81. 1886; Ridley, Fl. Mal. Penin. 3: 34. 1927. *P. sumatranum* C. DC., Prodr. 16 (1): 343. 1869; Hook. f., l. c. 81.

Dioecious woody lianas; main stem c. 6 cm across, bark greyish, lenticellate with nodal annular rings, nodes swollen. Leaves 10-17 x

6-9 cm, ovate to oblong-ovate or rarely lanceolate, deeply cordate at base, acute or shortly acuminate at apex, coriaceous, 8 to 9 nerved; petiole *c.* 6 cm, more or less robust. Female spikes *c.* 6 cm long. Drupes up to 6 mm across, globose on stout peduncles up to 2.2 cm long, orange turning red in colour, very pungent; pedicels up to 1 cm long.

Status: Very rare, most probably endangered.

Distribution: Malay Peninsula and Andaman Islands.

Habitat: Semi-evergreen Forest at an altitude of 50-60 m in humus-rich soil. Usually associated with tall forest trees like *Terminalia* spp.

Fl. & Fr.: October-March.

Conservation Status: No intensive measures were adopted for *in situ* conservation. A few plants have been introduced in the field gene bank established at the Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute under an *ex situ* conservation programme of the Andaman species undertaken by the Institute.

Specimen examined: South Andamans, Wright Myo, 22.v.1990, S.P. Mathew 20558 (PBL & K).

Though the genus *Piper* L. is well represented in the tropical and subtropical regions, it is rather poorly represented in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Based on the literature survey and herbarium specimens at PBL & CAL, there are only six species known to occur among the Islands. There are a few vegetative specimens from the Nicobar Islands deposited at PBL & CAL identified as *Piper clypeatum* Wall. However, the occurrence of this taxon is uncertain, due to the non-availability of their flowering and fruiting specimens. Hooker included *Piper ribesioides* Wall. under the taxonomic section *cubeba*. The dioecious nature, presence of solitary spikes, peltate female bracts and pedicellate fruits made Hooker

suggest that *Piper ribesioides* Wall. may be another form or a genetic variant of *Piper cubeba* L. f. This species also resembles *Piper pedicellosum* Wall. ex DC, another endangered species recorded from the Andaman Islands, of which there are a few old specimens at CAL. Hooker suggested that *Piper ribesioides* Wall. can be easily distinguished from the former by the larger size of leaves, petioles and pedicels. However, a thorough and detailed taxonomic study is required to make a conclusion, which is not possible due to the lack of adequate herbarium specimens. The specimen collected from Mount Harriet by one of the authors (S. P. Mathew 20558) was compared with the specimens at Kew and was found similar to *Piper sumatranum* C. DC., but this has been merged under *Piper ribesioides* Wall. The ripened fruits of *Piper ribesioides* Wall. are known to be used by the local people for treatment of mouth ulcer.

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